



BREAKING NEWS

- In a late-night email Monday to state employees, Department of Administration Secretary Joel Brennan said the administration is taking steps to cut the budgets of executive agencies by 5-percent in the current fiscal year. In his email, Brennan said the steps were necessary to provide “additional cushion until the revenue picture for the biennium becomes clearer.”
 - Assembly Speaker Robin Vos responded by calling the administration’s move “smart” and “proactive,” while also indicating that he “welcome[s] an opportunity to discuss ways we can work together on the looming fiscal crisis.”
 - Joint Finance Committee Co-Chair Rep. Nygren also applauded the move as a first step, but acknowledged it’s likely more will need to be done.
- The Assembly Committee on State Affairs plans to hold an informational hearing tomorrow to hear from a variety of business sectors and experts regarding the “Back to Business” plan introduced last week by the Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce.
 - In addition to hearing from impacted businesses, committee chairman Rep. Swearingen has extended an invitation to the CEO and Secretary-designee of the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), Missy Hughes.

- The WEDC has largely been the agency charged with making determinations as to which businesses are deemed essential versus non-essential under Evers’ “Safer at Home” order. [Click here for more information.](#)
 - [According to the latest data available from the Department of Health Services](#), Wisconsin now has 6,520 confirmed positive cases of the COVID-19 virus and 308 confirmed deaths. 66,630 negative test results have been reported. DHS is also now providing information on the recovery status of COVID-19 confirmed cases – [find the data here.](#)
 - According to the Wisconsin Hospital Association, [there are 350 total COVID-19 patients in our hospitals](#) – a 1-patient decrease over the last 24 hours.
 - [DHS has released new data on facility-wide public health investigations and outbreaks in areas across the state.](#) Currently, there are 187 COVID-19 facility-wide investigations and outbreaks.
 - [Click here for more information on COVID-19 data through DHS.](#)
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DAILY UPDATES – APRIL 29, 2020

State Updates:

- [The Department of Health Services announced today that the agency is providing more than \\$140 million dollars in food benefits](#) to families who are part of the National School Lunch Program who may be facing food insecurity during the Safer at Home order.
 - The food benefits will go to families for March, April May, and part of June, covering the days schools would usually be in session.
 - The program is referred to as the Pandemic Electronic Benefit transfer or P-EBT, with the funds being appropriated under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. [Learn more about the program here.](#)

- [A report released by the Center for Research on the Wisconsin Economy \(CROWE\) at UW-Madison](#) suggests moving toward a phased-in regional relaxation of distancing guidelines to best balance health risks and economic costs across the state.
- [UW-Madison announced campus-wide furloughs today](#) that are estimated to save them \$30 million. The furloughs are scaled in duration by pay range, and the chancellor and provosts are taking 15% cuts.
- The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection approved an [emergency rule to prohibit late fees or penalties for missed or late rent payments during COVID-19.](#)
- The Department of Workforce Development announced today that its [Unemployment Insurance Division has received 479,596 applications and distributed more than \\$290 million](#) in state unemployment benefits since March 15, 2020.
- [Southeastern Wisconsin's hospitals have not been overwhelmed by COVID-19 patients](#) due to Wisconsinites adhering to social distancing.
- [The Department of Children and Families submitted a formal request to the Joint Committee on Finance today](#) to use \$51 million to support Wisconsin's early care and education community – funding that comes from the federal CARES Act.
- [The Department of Workforce Development \(DWD\) reports that 6,713 initial applications were filed for unemployment insurance on Tuesday, April 28.](#) That brings the weekly total to 20,577.
 - DWD is currently receiving an unprecedented number of applications for benefits. In order to meet demand, those needing to [file unemployment insurance claims are encouraged to do so through the Department's website.](#) A number of frequently asked questions and answers is also available on this site. The phone lines remain open to applicants, but they may experience longer-than-usual delays.

- Those seeking employment may still do so by [registering on JobCenterofWisconsin.com](#). [The website will continue to be updated often as new jobs arise.](#)

Federal Updates:

- Following President Trump’s Executive Order to keep meat and poultry processing facilities open during the COVID-19 national emergency, [U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue issued a statement](#) applauding the order, and indicating that the Center for Disease Control and Occupational Safety and Health Administration have put out guidance for plants to implement to help ensure employee safety.
 - [The coronavirus pandemic is causing Americans to worry more about their money than their health](#), according to a study by MetLife Inc., the largest U.S. life insurer.
 - [FEMA issued its daily briefing points, with information related to the Whole-of-America response to the COVID-19 pandemic](#). Some highlights include:
 - As of April 28, FEMA, HHS, and the private sector have coordinated the delivery of or are currently shipping 75 million N95 respirators, 107.7 million surgical masks, 7.2 million face shields, 15.3 million surgical gowns, 814.8 million gloves, 10,153 ventilators, and 8,450 federal medical station beds.
 - As of April 27, CDC, state, and local public health labs and other laboratories have tested more than 5.6 million samples.
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GENERAL INFORMATION

Helpful Resources

- [The Assembly GOP Caucus has launched a GOP COVID-19 webpage](#). It will serve as a resource for up-to-date information, links to DHS and CDC information, graphics, and more.

- [The Federal Emergency Management Agency has created the Coronavirus Rumor Control page](#) to help folks distinguish between rumors and facts.

Education

- Governor Evers has directed the Department of Health Service to mandate a statewide closure of all K-12 schools. All schools will be closed beginning Wednesday, March 18th, and will remain closed through the rest of the 2019-20 school year.
- There are options for children who were participants in the Child Nutrition Program at school and may be facing food insecurity during the break.
 - [While School Food Authorities \(SFAs\) are not required to provide meals during a dismissal, they are encouraged to ensure that the needs of low-income children are met during extended school dismissals.](#)
 - Check with your local school districts for information regarding meals for children during the school closure.

Businesses

- Under Governor Evers' "Safer at Home" order, some businesses deemed "essential" may continue operation. [A Q&A and a listing of essential industries is available on the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation's \(WEDC\) website.](#)
- Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce (WMC) has compiled a COVID-19 Employer Toolkit to help employers and workers navigate the recent state and federal policy changes related to essential businesses, unemployment insurance, paid medical leave, small business loans, and more. [Find the Toolkit here.](#)
- Businesses performing essential functions not included in the categories listed on the WEDC website, [may request such designation by submitting this online form to the agency.](#)
- [The Department of Health Services has provided guidance for employers on COVID-19.](#)

- [The federal Center for Disease Control has compiled interim guidance for businesses and employers.](#)
- [Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce has also developed a toolbox of guides](#) to help employers navigate the COVID-19 virus.
- For summaries on loan programs available to small businesses, [visit NCSL's breakdown here.](#)
- The Small Business Administration, in consultation with the Department of Treasury, has issued a [FAQ on Paycheck Protection Program loans.](#)

Mental Health

- [Resilient Wisconsin](#), a new page from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, has consolidated the latest mental and behavioral health self-care tools and trauma-informed practices.
- [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's COVID-19 webpage](#) includes advice and guidance from mental health and suicide prevention experts.
- [NAMI Wisconsin has launched a website with COVID-19 resources related to mental health.](#)

Dining

- Despite the Governor's orders to close all restaurants and bars, take-out and delivery services are still permissible.
 - The [Wisconsin Restaurant Association has worked to compile a list of participating restaurants](#) offering such services.

Ways You Can Help

- Give Blood – [click here](#) to find a blood drive/donation center near you.
 - The Red Cross has indicated cancellations of blood appointments are at record highs. Encourage others to donate if they are healthy.
- Local food banks are asking for your assistance.
- The United Way and other [groups have created an online portal for those looking for volunteering opportunities in their community.](#)

- [Help your local small businesses.](#) Grab a meal for take-out or buy gift cards and shop online from local businesses to help them stay afloat during this time of uncertainty.
- Volunteer to pick up groceries or prescriptions for elderly in your community, or volunteer with a local organization who provides these services (ie: Meals on Wheels).
- Limit stockpiling, as grocery stores will remain open.

Services

- Internet:
 - [Charter is providing free Spectrum broadband and Wi-Fi access for 60 days](#) to households with K-12 and/or college students who do not already have a Spectrum broadband subscription and at any service level up to 100 Mbps. To enroll, call 1-844-488-8395
 - [Comcast is increasing speeds from 15/2 Mbps to 25/3 Mbps for all customers, and new customers are receiving two months of free service.](#) More information on Comcast's Internet Essentials program can be [found here](#).
 - [TDS is providing free broadband access](#) for new K-12, college student households for 60 days.
- Unemployment:
 - Information relating to unemployment benefits and COVID-19 can be found on the [Dept. of Workforce Development's informational page](#).
 - Applicants are encourage to apply for benefits online.
- Housing:
 - The Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) has a [FAQ for homeowners, renters, and housing providers in response to COVID-19](#). The FAQ is being updated as new information arises.
- Kids:
 - [Scholastic offers free online courses for children.](#)

- [50 activities parents can do with their kids during shutdown.](#)
- The [Department of Children and Families has developed new resources](#) to connect essential workforce families with locally available childcare.
 - Essential workforce families in need should [fill out this form](#).
 - Families can search for available care [using this map](#).